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Good Bye Winter Hello Spring



Happy St. Patrick's Day!

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Balanced News

MARCH UPDATE

Compelling Reasons to Start Eating More Plants!

Thankfully spring is almost here and it is the perfect time to make a fresh start and embrace a cleaner, healthier way of living! Reducing your intake of animal products and incorporating lots of wholesome plant foods into your diet is one of the best things you can

plants.”

Here are some inspiring reasons to eat more plant foods:

1. Healthy Gut Bacteria

A study published in the journal *Gut* uncovered that people who follow vegan diets have the highest levels of beneficial gut bacteria metabolites known as short chain fatty acids (SCFA). Conversely, those who consumed the most animal products had the highest levels of TMAO, a toxin that has been linked to increased risk of atherosclerosis (clogged arteries) heart attack and stroke. Interestingly, gut flora is significantly altered within a few days of switching to a predominately plant based diet. Healthy gut flora produces compounds that suppress inflammation in the body, and is associated with decreased risk of disease.

2. Heart Health

There are numerous studies demonstrating that consuming a diet high in fruits and vegetables lowers blood pressure, thus reducing the risk for cardiovascular disease including heart attacks and strokes. In one major study that tracked the health habits of about 110 000 people for 14 years, Harvard researchers found that the higher the subjects' intake of fruits and vegetables, the lower their chances of developing cardiovascular disease. Physicians such as Dr. Dean Ornish and Dr. Caldwell Esselstyn have completed studies demonstrating that following strict plant-based diets can in fact *reverse* serious heart disease.

3. Protect the Planet (and our Animal Friends)

Animal agriculture is a significant contributor to global warming, global water consumption, and green-house gas emissions. This occurs through deforestation caused by expansion of pasture and arable land used to grow feed-crops, and also by methane gas emissions, particularly from cattle. Animal agriculture is the largest methane source emitter in the world and is responsible for a larger proportion of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions than all modes of transportation combined. Factory farming also gets a lot of criticism for its notoriously inhumane treatment of animals. One must question the ethics of supporting an industry that uses horrific practices to produce the maximum amount of meat for human consumption at a minimal financial cost.

When cancer researchers started to search for links between diet and cancer, one of the most noticeable findings was that those who follow a plant-based diet were much less likely to develop the disease. Large studies in England and Germany showed that plant eaters were about 40 percent less likely to develop cancer compared to meat eaters. Another recent study demonstrated that women placed on plant-based diets for just *two weeks* gained the power to suppress the growth of three different types of breast cancers. Similar results were found in men against prostate cancer. This dramatic improvement in cancer defenses is thought to be due to changes in the level of IGF-1 in the blood (a cancer-promoting growth hormone that is significantly lower in plant eaters). Similarly, researchers Dr. Dean Ornish and Nobel-prize winning Dr. Elizabeth Blackburn found that following a vegan diet for only three months caused more than *500* genes to change, turning on genes that prevent disease and turning off genes that promote life-threatening illnesses such as cancer.

5. Maintenance of Healthy Weight

Opting for meals based largely around fruits, vegetables, whole grains and vegetable proteins will leave you feeling fuller on fewer calories. Much research demonstrates that vegetarians typically have lower body-mass indexes than non-vegetarians. A plant-based diet is packed with fiber which lowers cholesterol and stabilizes blood sugar levels, preventing over-eating and helping you feel fuller longer.

Ways to Start Eating More Plants

Some of you may be inspired try a 30-day vegan challenge to jump-start a healthier lifestyle. However, for those of you who are devout carnivores, don't despair: you don't have to become a full-blown vegan/ vegetarian to realize many of the above benefits. Start small by challenging yourself to a "Meatless Monday" policy. Gradually work up to eating plant-based meals centered around fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains and legumes several times a week. There are lots of inspiring resources on the internet to help you create delicious plant-based meals.

Others who like plant-based eating but don't want to give up animal products altogether can adopt a "flexitarian" lifestyle: a semi-vegetarian diet that involves the occasional inclusion of animal products. Examples of this lifestyle include the "Vegan Before 6pm" diet, developed and popularized by New York Times food columnist Mark Bittman to successfully reverse his

benefits of eating vegetarian Monday to Friday. Both of these authors offer many resources on how to eat a more plant-centric diet.

Thus eating to protect the planet and your personal health does not have to be an all-or-nothing affair. No matter how you go about it, the sense of clarity, well-being and increased energy you will experience from including more plants in your diet will be addictive!

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(Feel free to email me if you have questions, would like a list of references to this article, or would like some resources/ recipes/ advice on how to transition to healthy, plant-based eating).

In honour of St. Patrick's Day and Spring, I have included some healthy green recipes for you to create in your kitchen.

Shamrock PureLean Smoothie

(Makes one large serving)

This shake is great for breakfast or post-workout and packs over 15 grams of protein, and lots of healthy fats, antioxidants, vitamins and minerals. It features a high quality protein powder PureLean that we sell at Balanced Health, but you can feel free to substitute your favourite plant-based protein powder (plain or vanilla).



- 1 cup unsweetened plant milk (e.g. almond or cashew milk)
- 1 serving Purelean protein powder
- few drops peppermint extract (depending on how minty you want your smoothie)
- ½ tsp spirulina powder or handful of raw spinach
- 1 large frozen banana (or 1 ½ small bananas)
- *Make sure the banana is frozen, as this will create a creamier smoothie

Blend all ingredients in a high-speed blender until smooth. Drink and enjoy!

*If you want to create a mint-chip like shake, pulse in a tablespoon of raw cacao nibs or dark chocolate chips after blending your smoothie.

*If mint isn't your thing, you can omit the peppermint extract and add in a tablespoon of almond butter for even more protein and healthy fats.



Limited time only purchase Douglas Laboratories Pure Lean Protein for 25% off.



Raw Super-Seed Kale Salad

This is a go-to healthy kale salad that I make frequently. It is inspired by Planet Organic's "Hail to the Kale" salad. Our two-year old actually asks me to make this salad for him even though he is not a big kale fan.

- 1 large bunch of kale, de-stemmed and finely chopped
- 1/2 head small red cabbage, finely sliced and chopped
- 3-4 carrots, grated
- 1/3 cup sunflower seeds or slivered almonds
- 1/3 cup pumpkin seeds
- 1/4 cup hemp seeds
- Optional : 1/4 cup goji berries (or dried cranberries or currants)

1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup Bragg's liquid aminos (or coconut aminos)
1/4 cup apple cider vinegar

Combine the salad ingredients. Whisk the dressing and thoroughly coat the salad. This salad will keep well in the fridge, as the kale leaves are hearty



Creamy Avocado Dill Pesto

1 cup avocado
1/4 cup fresh dill (or basil if you prefer a more traditional pesto)
2 Tbsps avocado oil (or olive oil)
2 Tbsps lemon (or lime)
2 Tbsps hemp seeds
1 large or 2 small cloves garlic
1/2 tsp salt

Blend all ingredients in a high speed blender or food processor until fairly smooth. This pesto makes a delicious and healthy sauce to serve over whole grain noodles, spiralized zucchini noodles or steamed vegetables.

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